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Senate passes package preserving Michigan's waters

LANSING – The Senate unanimously approved legislation today to provide comprehensive regulations for water use in Michigan, said Sen. Patty Birkholz, chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Senate Bills 850-852, 854 and 857 create new standards for water withdrawals and permit programs for waters users to help them avoid adverse impacts on the environment. These new regulations would help prevent a water crisis in the future and help preserve the Great Lakes for future generations.

“Michigan’s inland waters and the surrounding Great Lakes are too precious to be ignored, thus, these new policies will help those who use our water do so in a way that is both environmentally friendly and economically sound,” said Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township. “Many of Michigan’s job providers - manufacturers, farmers and utilities for example – rely on water in day-to-day operations and this legislation will allow them to remain a vital component of Michigan’s future.”

The package will:

- Put in place a system to manage significant new water withdrawals that have the potential to impact our water and water-dependent natural resources;
- Implement an interim standard that will provide protections for key designated trout streams by defining critical zones around the streams;
- Develop an easy-to-use model to replace the interim standard that will allow a user to click on a map and determine if water use will cause an adverse impact;
- Implement a permitting program for the largest water users in the state; and
- Authorize the creation of groups of water users to work with the DEQ in crafting water plans that resolve water use problems before adverse impacts occur.

(More)

“Michigan's water resources are essential to the future of this state. That is why I have worked to safeguard this tremendous natural resource for many years in many different ways,” said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. “Senator Birkholz pulled together an incredibly diverse group to get this part of the job done. There is always more to do when it comes to protecting our waters, but I commend everyone involved for understanding how important this is and for their willingness to compromise.”

The legislation now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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